

NYC Attack: Why ISIS And Terrorists Use Trucks To Kill People And Spread Fear

By Max Kutner, Beatrice Dupuy and Christianna Silva On 10/31/17 at 6:50 PM

Truck rampages like the Tuesday attack in New York City, in which a driver allegedly struck and killed at least eight people, are virtually impossible to predict or prevent — which is why terrorists keep committing them, experts say.

“The threat of vehicle attack is paralyzing in its own way and worse than single shooter attack,” Rob Reiter, pedestrian safety expert and chief security expert of Calpipe Security Bollards, told *Newsweek*.

“When you have a big event, you can police (it). You can’t police from everywhere 365 days a year,” he said.

Data from Reiter's firm, which installed bollards in Times Square last year to help prevent car mayhem, said vehicular terror attacks in 2016 killed 601 people in Western nations — more than bombings, shootings and stabbings combined.

Security analysts have noted a rise in vehicle ramming attacks in recent years, with dozens happening throughout Europe in the 2010s. Extremist groups including Al-Qaeda and ISIS encouraged followers to use this tactic as an alternative to guns and explosives, which law enforcement can more easily detect.

In 2010, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI [wrote in a memo](#) that car attacks offer “terrorists with limited access to explosives or weapons an opportunity to conduct a Homeland attack with minimal prior training or experience.”

The memo warned that attacks could occur in areas where people congregate, and that the method “offers terrorists with limited access to explosives or weapons an opportunity to conduct a Homeland attack with minimal prior training or experience.”

Al-Qaeda wrote about such attacks in its English-language magazine in 2013, [saying](#), “The idea is to use a pickup truck as a mowing machine, not to mow grass but mow down the enemies of Allah.”

A year later, a spokesman for [ISIS said in a speech](#), “If you are not able to find an [improvised explosive device] or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him.”

The deadliest truck attack so far happened last July in Nice, France, when a lone wolf terrorist plowed a rented vehicle through the crowds celebrating Bastille Day, killing 86 people. This June, a man in [Finsbury Park](#), London, committed what analysts said was the first vehicle ramming attack by an anti-Muslim extremist.

In May, the Transportation Security Administration alerted trucking companies nationwide and educated them about the suspicious signs to watch from customers.

"No community, large or small, rural or urban, is immune to attacks of this kind by organized or 'lone wolf' terrorists," the TSA report said.

Some cities have been changing their busy streets to curb such an attack. In New York, parts of Times Square and the Financial District have anti-vehicle ramps (which were not in the lower Manhattan bike path where the Tuesday attack happened). So does the British Parliament compound, Canary Wharf and the financial districts in London, which saw a deadly car attack on London Bridge this year. Nice also installed barriers on its beach promenade after the bloodbath there.

But as experts have previously told [Newsweek](#), the increased policing of streets and vehicles could lead to major compromises of civilian freedoms. Ultimately, the security outlook for these attacks in major cities is, for now, bleak.